Social and Cultural Trends

Introduction

JOHN A. FLECKNER

About the author: John Fleckner is archivist for the National Museum of American History, a position he has held since 1983. He is a past president and a current Fellow of the Society of American Archivists.

DR. RAMÓN GUTIÉRREZ, of the Ethnic Studies and History Departments at the University of California at San Diego, presented the focal paper for the 2020 Vision session on social and cultural trends. His paper demonstrates an extraordinary breadth of knowledge and brilliance that made quite evident the reasons this younger scholar was selected as a McArthur fellow, among his many other distinctions. This summary cannot begin to do justice to the complexity of argument and the range of examples his paper contains, nor can I vouch that the conclusions and observations drawn by the two commentators and by me will have Gutiérrez's concurrence.

Gutiérrez's reflections on the future avoid specific predictions. Instead, he identifies a fundamental tension that has shaped the course of history since the era of Columbus: a tension between "global processes" and reactions against them, which he terms *local knowledge* or *local hatred*.

The global movements of people, money, technology, and ideas—sometimes labeled by Gutiérrez as *de-territorialization* and *displacement*—are not unfamiliar to readers of a daily newspaper. What we often forget is that these processes began with the European discovery of the planet's wind system and with the invention of the modern nation state, both roughly five hundred years ago.

We also forget the extraordinary degree to which this process has changed our world, especially in the past half century. Multinational corporations—owing their loyalties only to their multinational stockholders—have made the nation-state largely irrelevant as an economic unit. The movement of peoples has profoundly changed the nature of "settler societies" such as Canada and the United States. In the United States, for example, the English-origin population, which constituted an 80 percent majority in the first census of 1790, now accounts for only 25 percent.

For all their power to change the world, the processes of globalization also have generated strong forces of resistance. Gutiérrez's description of this resistance uses the language of contemporary academic discourse and cultural criticism, which, at least for this lay reader, is sometimes

opaque. Yet his conceptual framework offers us a valuable perspective for considering the archival mission and the future in which we will pursue it.

Beginning in the era of Columbus, and continuing today, resistance to de-territorialization has been expressed in the form of "intense nationalisms" whose objective is

> to reterritorialize space through the primordia of the human body, through such things as language, kinship, sexuality, and skin color. These cultural distinctions are the most intimate symbols of our local repertoire and as such are capable of transforming loyalty to households, neighborhoods, and religions into national missions.

Gutiérrez explains that these nationalisms or "local hatreds" rely on the use of the human body as a metaphor for the larger society. The human body is a powerful metaphor for this purpose because of its physicality and because in most cultures the body is "imagined as a biological given, as a universal and unchanging fact of human experience." In the United States, for example, the dominant "white Anglo-Saxon Protestant notions of kinship, blood, and family that when projected outward became the fate of the American nation," producing such phenomena as racial purity laws and anti-immigration hostility. Similarly, from this perspective prejudice and discrimination against women, African Americans, Native Americans, and gays and lesbians were viewed as simply in "the natural order of things."

On deeper analysis, of course, the human body—like human history—turns out not to be an immutable and natural object but, in Gutiérrez's words, "a culturally constructed system of signs, symbols, and meanings." In particular, those bedrocks of identity—sex, gender, and sexuality—prove to have little or no biological or psychological basis. Yet the ways in which these categories are currently constructed silently uphold patterns of discrimination and disadvantage. As Gutiérrez observes, "patriarchy precariously teeters" on the notion of "the binary nature of gender identities."

Finally, Gutiérrez argues, much of current and future politics can be understood as debates over control of the human body and, by extension, over the fate of the social order imagined through categories of the body. With this conceptualization, Gutiérrez ties together such diverse struggles as those over abortion and choice, over English-only rules for schools and other public functions, and over censorship of artistic representation of the human body. He also explains the unlikely history of the construction of the Latino and Asian-American ethnic identities over the past thirty years as a response to the dominant Anglo-American culture.

Formal commentary by Nancy Sahli of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission draws out some of the archival implications of these themes. The rapid shrinking of the planet, especially through telecommunications, offers opportunities to disseminate archival information to a degree previously unimaginable. Yet archivists, hard pressed on all sides by competing demands, must develop the standards necessary for this communication. Perhaps less obvious, they must also take a more assertive role in user education to ensure that clients understand the potential of new communications, especially those clients who are, in Sahli's works, "culturally uncomfortable with or unable to use the dominant computer technology."

Global processes of economic and social change offer other challenges as well. Today a few archives—for example, the Center for the History of Physics of the American Institute of Physics—are examining how to document multi-institutional,

multinational activities such as those in contemporary physics research. But the archival establishment is simply unable to do this in any systematic say. Instead, argues Sahli,

> what we may hope for is that bits and pieces of the record will be preserved by archivists in the various countries in which these corporations and intergovernmental agencies do business. Yet without clear demarcations of jurisdiction in either the corporate or political sphere, whose responsibility should it be to preserve the records of enduring value created by these strange, octopus-armed creatures?

To archivists, these global developments are as challenging as the cultural critiques with which Gutirrez confronts us. Archival institutions and practices, like notions of the human body, are cultural constructions shaped—usually quite unconsciously—by the dominant values of the day. Sahli urges us

> to reflect on the way that the historical records that [we] do collect and make available for use serve, like the body, as a '. . . system of signs, symbols, and meanings.' Choosing to retain documentation only of policy decisions rather than of implementation practices, when those policy decisions may be made by Euro-American males and the implementation practices may be carried out by African-American females, sends a definite message about what is worth remembering.

Sahli also argues that

> the concept of hierarchy is as much a reflection of patterns of dominance and authority prevalent in corporate and government systems in Western Europe [in the early twentieth century when modern archival practice emerged] as it is a useful method for organizing historical records and information about them.

In particular, our reliance on agency histories and descriptions of document form assume that researchers are most interested in bureaucratic organization rather than in what an organization actually did and the topics with which it dealt.

Debra Newman Ham of the Library of Congress offers the second commentary. She notes that as Euro-Americans came to dominate the American continent, they shaped American cultural institutions to their own interests. In particular, their archival institutions preserved papers documenting the lives of their great men. In the later twentieth century, minority groups gained political empowerment after a long civil rights movement. This, in turn, fueled "the desire to learn more about the culturally disenfranchised."

This greater attention to this past, among other reasons, has changed the amount and nature of research in archives. Ham describes the busy reading room of her own institution's manuscripts division in these words:

> Mainstream historians sit beside braided-beaded scholars who insist that the mainstream cannot be properly assessed without an understanding of the inarticulate. Think about this: even while Patrick Henry was firing up the auditorium with the words 'liberty or death' he held African Americans in bondage on his Virginia plantation. As Jefferson penned the works about inalienable rights, he struggled with the question of slavery. George Washington followed Sir Guy Carleton and the evacuating British to Staten Island to try to re-

> claim his slaves who had sought liberty with the king's troops.

Ham draws a further point about the needs of research scholars, both new and old. They want, and indeed expect, greater accessibility; "user-friendly finding aids, quick service, long reading-room hours, and a comfortable work environment." Unfortunately, archival institutions burdened with growing demands and declining resources often cannot meet these expectations.

I would like to conclude with two observations of my own on Gutiérrez's paper. First, as archivists we would do well to direct our documentary efforts toward those conflicts which he describes at one point as "civil wars" raging with "the American body politic." These critical moments reveal both larger historical forces and the clashes of values engendered by them. In such documentary efforts we should strive to be self-conscious about our own views and actions. We should also wrestle with the tough question of what best constitutes historical evidence of "culturally constructed systems of signs, symbols, and meanings." These may not be the textual records with which we are most familiar.

At the same time, we can take heart in knowing that the historical record, for all its biases—intended and unintended—remains rich with meaning for those who come to it with thoughtful questions. Yes, archives will reflect the dominant society and its institutions. But the contents of the archives can never be entirely "cleansed," and future generations will discover histories there which were little anticipated or intended.

Ramón Gutiérrez reminded us that the larger forces shaping our history are global and long-term as well as local and immediate. Nancy Sahli added to this her own concerns about the future of the global environment and the changing demographics of the American population. The consequences of all these developments—and of the other major social shifts we might equally well have cited here—will become known to us only over time. Perhaps the most we can say now is that the year 2020 will seem even more strange to us than the year 1964 now seems.

Nancy Sahli's sage advice in facing this unknowable future is an appropriate conclusion to this discussion:

> We need to remember that our principal function is to preserve records of enduring value and make them available for use. . . . [T]hose records will take many forms, just as our users will change to keep pace with the demographics of our society. But adapting to change is not an end in itself. Archivists should not surrender all the values that have governed the evolution of our profession and its institutions over the years. The difficult task is to determine those we should retain and those we should discard or change. It is up to you to come up with the answers.

Social and Cultural Trends

Decolonizing the Body: Kinship and the Nation

RAMÓN A. GUTIÉRREZ

About the author: Ramón A. Gutiérrez is professor of ethnic studies and history, the founding chair of the Ethnic Studies Department, and the director of the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at the University of California, San Diego. Trained as a historian of colonial Latin America and the U. S. Southwest, his publications include When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality and Power in New Mexico, 1500–1846 *(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991),* Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage *(Houston, Tx.: Arte Público Press, 1993),* The Encyclopedia of the North American Colonies *(New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), and* Festivals and Celebrations in American Ethnic Communities *(forthcoming, 1994).*

THIS YEAR WE COMMEMORATE the five-hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus's first voyage of exploration to the Americas. As we contemplate the significance of that event and the changes it precipitated, we can recognize that one of the most important legacies for us today was the creation of our modern global universe. Before 1492, people, money, commodities, and ideas moved largely within the boundaries of powerful states or within limited zones of intercommunication. Sub-Saharan African merchants, for example, traded camels and dates up and down the Niger River. Aztec merchant-priests bartered jaguar pelts, macaw feathers, and golden trinkets for turquoise along the Turquoise Trail, which connected Mexico City and New Mexico. Phoenician traders were crossing the waters of the Mediterranean by ship several centuries before the birth of Christ, linking their Levantine homeland to Egypt through the exchange of timber, dyes, and textiles. The most sophisticated seamen of the fifteenth century, the Chinese, through trade connected the terrains that bordered the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.[1]

The birth of our global community in 1492 is usually ascribed to two larger fifteenth-century European discoveries—the first technological, the second ideological. The technology that allowed Europeans to cross the Atlantic Ocean in search of a shorter route to Asia was not a revolution

[1] Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1982); Immaneuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

in ship design but the discovery of our planet's wind system. By the middle of the fifteenth century, Portuguese merchants off the Saharan coast of Africa had mastered the regularity of the trade winds north and south of the equator. In 1498 Vasco de Gama learned the patterns of the monsoons in the Indian Ocean. And as a result of Magellans voyage around the Cape of Good Hope, the wind system of the Pacific Ocean became known by the early sixteenth century.[2]

Knowing how the winds blow made it possible for Europeans to circumnavigate the world for the first time. Spanish mariners began taking products from the Philippines to Mexico for reshipment through Spain to England, commerce which the Dutch and English East India Companies exploited, connecting Asian, African, European, and North and South American ports. Peoples, commodities, money, and ideas started to circulate around the globe. The later inventions of the steamboat, the airplane, the computer, and the telephone only accelerated the pace of this circulation.

The second invention—an ideological one, ascribed not specifically to Columbus but to his patrons, King Ferdinand of Aragón and Queen Isabella of Castile—was the invention of the modern nation-state.[3] The year 1492 marked the final expulsion of the Moors from the Iberian Peninsula, where they had been since 711. For centuries, the Christian kingdoms and principalities of the peninsula had fought to reconquer their homelands and extricate the influence of Islam from their midst. With the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella in 1459, the manpower, the will, and the fervor were finally amassed to accomplish this task.

The marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella signified the joining of two powerful lineages, creating a sense of space and place that was rooted in local and particularistic notions of blood, family, kinship, and faith. Here was the birth of Spain, a state invested with the ancestral language of Castile (Castilian), generalizing the kinship practices of the first families of Aragón and Castile and their Catholic faith as the foundation for what the Romans called the *natio*, the place of birth, from which the modern word *nation* derives.

Looking back over the long sweep of historical developments, it seems quite paradoxical that at the very moment that global knowledge was exploding exponentially, the ideological seeds for the denial of that globalization were being planted through the elevation of local systems of cultural knowledge as the reason of territorially defined states. Ferdinand and Isabella may have been the first monarchs to elevate their natal practices to the logic of state, but since then, one nation after another has tried to seize, co-opt, and transform in a similar manner the political project of the state as its own. Seizing symbols from the realm of kinship and religion, modern states have constructed citizens by choreographing civic culture, projecting an ideal commonwealth, and imaging the nation.[4]

As we reflect on the past here today and anticipate the future, I want to focus on the fundamental tensions between global processes and local systems of knowledge, which are now shaping our social and cultural life, and which undoubtedly will dictate how that life is experienced, imagined, and contested over the next fifty years. The

[2] On the discovery of the earth's wind system, see Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade*.

[3] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 16.

[4] Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Werner Sollors, ed., *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

massive movement of peoples, money, and technology both to and from the United States, between and among the various hemispheres of the globe, and across the known borders and boundaries of our world is what I would like to explore first. After examining the logic of what I call *de-territorializations*—that is, the brusque erasure of customary boundaries and the obliteration of established matrices of power—I will then turn to the cultural politics that such displacements have engendered thus far.

The global movement of people, money, technology, and ideas has made de-territorialization a major cultural preoccupation in the United States, as well as in many of the other states in the world. Resistance to such displacements is being expressed through intense nationalisms in the United States, Canada, the former Soviet and Yugoslav states, and many others. The project of these nationalisms is to reterritorialize space through the primordia of the human body, through such things as language, kinship, sexuality, and skin color. These cultural distinctions are the most intimate symbols of our local repertoire and as such are capable of transforming loyalty to households, neighborhoods, and religions into national missions and the destiny of a particular identity.[5]

Over the last thirty years, one of the dominant trends in our world, and indeed a trend that seems to be accelerating, has been the cross-border migration of workers. Historically, these workers have largely migrated from poor developing countries south of the equator to richer industrialized countries in the north. But with the recent collapse of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Empire, numerous workers have begun migrating from East to West. Globally, perhaps as many as 80 million people are working in a country other than the one they claim as their own. Through their earnings and remittances, these workers frequently each support four or five people at home, or a total of approximately 320 million people.[6]

Global workers on the move come from opposite ends of the social scale. The poor and unskilled huddled masses increasingly are joined by better- educated skilled technicians seeking opportunities unavailable at home. It does not take much imagination to understand why a Filipina cook who earns $215 a month would migrate to Italy where she can earn $900 for the same amount of work; it is the same logic that explains why Thai bar girls flock to Tokyo and why Mexicans move to Los Angeles. And since more than half of all Ph.D.s granted by American universities in engineering and computer science are earned by foreigners, it is easy to see why, for example, the Peruvian computer engineer opts to stay in Chicago to earn $2,800 a month instead of returning to Lima, where, if the job existed, it would pay only $300.[7]

As increasing proportions of the world's population are being displaced, ebbing and flowing across the borders of nation-states, so also has capital been uprooted from its ancestral home. In the last twenty years, we have seen the emergence of stateless corporations competing in a global market they imagine as borderless and moving money, production, and commodities faster, in some instances, than the Concorde can transport people.

Call them international, interterritorial, multinational, transnational, or global corporations, but the reality of the last thirty

[5] Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Public Culture* 2 (Spring 1990): 15.

[6] William D. Montalbano, "A Global Pursuit of Happiness," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 October 1991, p. H1.

[7] These comparisons were derived from statistics in the International Labor Office, *1990 Bulletin of Labor Statistics* (Geneva: 1991).

years has been the same: "The international corporation has no country to which it owes more loyalty than any other, nor any country where it feels completely at home. . . . The nation-state is just about through as an economic unit," wrote Massachusetts Institute of Technology economics professor Charles Kindleberger in 1969.[8] In recent publications, Robert B. Reich, a political economist formerly at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government and currently the U.S. Secretary of Labor, has forcefully underscored this reality. American-owned multinationals are starting to employ more foreign workers than Americans, are relying more on foreign facilities for their complex productive activities, and are exporting a greater number of products from their foreign facilities back into the United States.

The Whirlpool Corporation, for example, employed 43,500 workers in 45 different countries in 1989, but few of these were American citizens. Of the total number of employees working for IBM, 44 percent of them work outside the territorial boundaries of the United States and are citizens of other countries. This is also the case for 31 percent of General Motors' employees, 24 percent of DuPont's, and 17 percent of General Electric's.[9]

Multinationals have increasingly globalized their productive operations across national boundaries, undertaking the unskilled assembly of their products in countries where low wages and unskilled labor abound, leaving the skilled design and finishing for places where the forces of production are better suited.[10] It is perhaps startling to discover that AT&T, RCA, and Texas Instruments are Taiwan's biggest corporate exporters. "In fact, more than one-third of Taiwan's notorious trade surplus with the United States comes from U.S. corporations making or buying things there, then selling or using them in the United States." Similar business practices account for the trade imbalance between the United States and South Korea, Singapore, and Mexico.[11]

The unsuspecting American consumer urged to "buy American," may not realize that if he or she buys a General Motors Pontiac Le Mans, 30 percent of its cost goes to South Korea for its assembly; 17.5 percent to Japan for the engine, transaxles, and advanced electronics; 7.5 percent to West Germany for styling and design; another 7 percent to Taiwan, Singapore, Britain, Ireland, and Barbados for advertising, marketing, data processing, and small components; and finally 35 percent goes to the Detroit company headquarters for corporate expenses and shareholder profits, the majority of whom are increasingly foreign nationals.[12] "Buy American"?

Perhaps the most startling de-territorialization that has occurred over the last thirty years has been the erasure of the borders and boundaries that delimit the human body. What were previously considered the body's sacred and inviolable perimeters no longer are. One hundred years ago, when X-ray technology was invented, humans were amazed that they could behold an image of the body's skeletal system without having to enter the body. Today we can

[8] Charles P. Kindleberger, *American Business Abroad* (New Haven, Conn.: 1969), lecture 6.

[9] For a challenge to the Reich "thesis," see Yao-Su Hu, "Global or Stateless Corporations Are National Firms with International Operations," *California Management Review* 34 (Winter 1992): 107–26.

[10] Joseph Grunwald and Kenneth Flamm, *The Global Factory: Foreign Assembly in International Trade* (Washington, D.C.: 1985); Kenichi Ohmae, "Managing in a Borderless World," *Harvard Business Review* 67 (May–June 1989): 152–61; William B. Johnston, "Global Work Force 2000: The New World Labor Market," *Harvard Business Review* 69 (March–April 1991): 115–29.

[11] Robert B. Reich, "Who Is Us?" *Harvard Business Review* 68 (January–February 1990): 53–55. See also Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st-Century Capitalism* (New York: 1991).

[12] Reich, *The Work of Nations*, 113.

gaze at the inner working of the body through the heat we generate and imprint on a cat scan, through the sound frequencies that reverberate through our bodies and are recorded on film as magnetic resonance images (MRIs), and through all sorts of sophisticated scopes that allow us to see inside our arteries, intestines, and vital organs.

Through advances in biology, the line that once clearly separated humans' bodies from animals' bodies also becomes fuzzier every day. Ten years ago, a headline reading "Human Receives Baboon Heart" might have seemed like the sensationalism of the *National Enquirer*, but today the news of baboon liver and heart transplants offers humans hope for an extended life. People suffering from degenerative neurological disorders such as Alzheimers or Huntington's Chorea—diseases caused by the death of cells in certain parts of the brain—are being successfully treated through fetal tissue transplants. Advances in in-vitro fertilization and artificial insemination now quite routinely allow women, who twenty years ago would not have been able to conceive, to give birth to healthy babies of whatever sex they may choose.

The greatest frontier of human biology is the Human Genome Project to map the genes that encode all the different proteins of the body onto our 23 chromosomes. When this work is completed, scientists theoretically will be able to predict who will get certain genetically transmitted diseases and disorders, and they may even be able to correct them while the person is still in utero. Through cloning, DNA is already produced in laboratories every day. Cloned genes made up of DNA are being used successfully to cure disease in animal models. Someday in the near future, gene replacement therapy may make it possible to alter fundamentally the body's genetic substance.[13]

At this moment in our social and economic life, humans, capital, and production are being freed from the boundaries of the nation-state invented in the nineteenth century. And at this moment in our technological development, we are being liberated from the constraints of our physical bodies. But now we find that the local systems of knowledge anchored to the body as identities based on ethnicity, race, religion, gender, and sexuality are provoking civil wars far and wide. In each of these places, a biological essentialism is being used to imagine the human body as a primordial myth of origin, as a symbol of purity and social order, and as a genealogy and history of what has been, rather than as a matrix of what can be.

How the human body serves as a metaphor for the articulation of social and cultural forces, interests, and values has been described by anthropologist Mary Douglas, who wrote,

> The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened and precarious. The body is a complex structure. The functions of its different parts and their relation afford a source of symbols for other complex structures. We can not possibly interpret rituals [and beliefs] concerning excreta, breast milk, saliva and the rest unless we are prepared to see the body as a symbol of society, and to see the powers and dangers credited to social structure reproduced in small on the human body.[14]

Within our culture and many others around the globe, the body is often imagined as a biological given, as a universal

[13] I want to thank Dr. Jane Sullivan for sharing her knowledge of the frontiers of biological science.

[14] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1966), 116.

and unchanging fact of human experience. Despite the great array of cultural meanings that we ascribe to the body, the cultural systems that generate those categories are often transparent and taken as the general order of things. Because the basic categories of the body "are learned early, slowly, richly, and subtly, because they are often widely shared among members of a culturally distinctive community, and because many of them are tacit (that is, not explicit, readily articulated, or fully within awareness)," the body is seen as a natural fact, as a reality that is above and beyond what can be socially debated; indeed, as the only real, authentic, and natural thing in our age of massification, commodification, and displacement.[15]

Until quite recently, in the Judeo-Christian tradition we were used to reading and perhaps thinking that women were inferior to men by God's natural design.[16] In the pseudo-science of the nineteenth century, the measurably smaller crania of black Africans and Native Americans, in comparison with those of white Europeans, was seen as "natural," incontrovertible biological evidence of their intellectual inferiority.[17] And homosexuality, the "unmentionable vice," had to be punished, stated the theologians, because the sin of the sodomite was the sin against nature.[18] The prejudice and discrimination against women, Africans, Native Americans, and homosexuals was not in the realm of personal responsibilities but in the natural order of things.

In saying that the body is a culturally constructed system of signs, symbols, and meanings, please do not conclude that I am denying the existence of physical bodies. My point is that the body's physicality is precisely what gives it its symbolic power and what allows arbitrary cultural categories to be invested with the aura of "naturalness" that has no history and always has been.

In the lexicon we use to classify bodies in Western Atlantic societies, we give an inordinate amount of attention to the categories that define the communicative dimensions of personhood, to identities believed to originate in blood and speech, in skin color, in eye shape and color, in hair texture and color, in the size and shape of genitals, and in a body's stature and smell. By "reading" the body's tatoos and scars, with or without cosmetics and dress and in its various postures and gestures, we infer a complex set of assumptions about personal embodiment.[19] "Did you see what she was doing with her tongue?" "He put his hand where?" are but two examples of how we read body language and draw moral lessons accordingly.

Since sex, gender and sexualities are the fundamental bedrock on which the local identities of race, ethnicity, and nationality are constructed and animated, let us examine how science has helped us to decon-

[15] Fitz John Poole, "The Idea of the Natural in the Cultural Construction of the Body," unpublished paper, 1991, p. 7.

[16] Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed., *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974).

[17] Stephen Jay Gould, "Measuring Heads: Paul Broca and the Heyday of Craniology," in *The Mismeasure of Man* edited by S. J. Gould (New York: Norton, 1981), pp. 73–112. On Native Americans, see Robert E. Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian, 1820–1880* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986). For an excellent discussion of how women were imagined by early scientists, see Londa Schiebinger, "Skeletons in the Closet: The First Illustrations of the Female Skeleton in Eighteenth-Century Anatomy," in *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1987), 42–82.

[18] Michael Goodich, *The Unmentionable Vice: Homosexuality in the Later Medieval Period* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Ross-Erickson, 1979).

[19] Frances E. Mascia-Lees and Patricia Sharpe, eds., *Tatoo, Torture, Mutilation, and Adornment: The Denaturalization of the Body in Culture and Text* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992).

struct what we once imagined as immutable "natural" categories. In just about every society worldwide, the genitals are signs and symbols of deeper and less visible distinctions that differentiate human bodies into at least two sexes and into two mutually exclusive categories. In our own Euro-American context, despite the fact that scientists have very complex ways of differentiating sex— genetic sex, hormonal sex, gonadal sex and morphological sex—our everyday common-sense folk models tell us that a physical inspection of the genitals is all that is really necessary to tell a boy from a girl. Once the anatomy of the body is mapped, the natural terrain that that map is supposed to represent is used for the construction of complex gender edifices. Many of the dispositions and behaviors we equate with gender, such as emotional, psychological, and behavioral capacities, are seldom directly embodied. Nonetheless, we assume them, and they assume a very powerful force, as when we say that "boys will be boys" and "girls will be girls."[20]

Transsexuals allow us to focus sharply on the arbitrary and yet interested relationship between biological sex and gender.[21] Judith Shapiro has argued that "transsexualism reveals that a society's gender system is a trick done with mirrors," mirrors that are strategically placed to reproduce a particular social and cultural order.[22] Transsexuals are persons whose "true" gender is at odds with their anatomical sex and who undergo sex-change surgery to reorder the body to conform with the gender subjectivity and identity they feel. Georges Borou, perhaps the most famous sex-change surgeon, expressed the relationship between sex and gender well when he baldly stated, "I don't change men into women. I transform male genitals into genitals that have a female aspect. All the rest is in the patient's mind."[23] What was in his patients' minds were female subjectivities that were at odds with their physical bodies. Writing about the torment she experienced before her surgery, James Morris, the writer and journalist who became Jan Morris in 1972, said that she felt "trapped in that cage [a man's body]." To free themselves from the wrong body, transsexuals consciously engage in a gender performance, the same type of performance all of us unconsciously engage in every day, but which we deem natural. The process of passing as another gender entails first transvesting the body, assuming its postures and dispositions, acquiring its occupational roles and ambitions, and finally surgically changing the body's external physical features.

Once the physical transformation is complete, according to the literature, transsexuals experience what might be called the "convert's syndrome," the fervor of the convert who is more orthodox than one born to the faith. Male-to-female transsexuals exhibit much more conservative and stereotypical feminine attributes than do women. "In many of their everyday activities, attitudes, habits, and emphases what our culture expects women to be," writes sociologist Thomas Kando, transsexuals also are, "only more so."[24]

What transsexuals gain by passing, learning a new gender performance, erasing their personal histories, and changing their bodies is acceptance as part of soci-

[20] Harry Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (New York: Julian Press, 1966), 5–9.

[21] Interested insofar as the cultural categories of gender are anchored to biological male and female reproductive bodies, yet arbitrary in the range of meanings that stem therefrom.

[22] Judith Shapiro, "Transsexualism: Reflections on the Persistence of Gender and the Mutability of Sex," in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, edited by Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (New York: Routledge, 1991), 249.

[23] Burou quoted in Shapiro, "Transsexualism," 261.

[24] Thomas Kando, *Sex Change: The Achievement of Gender Identity Among Feminized Transsexuals* (Springfield, Ill.: Thomas, 1973), 22–27.

ety's established gender system. Transsexuals do not challenge the binary opposition of gender, they fundamentally buttress it. But by altering their external appearances and learning the body hexia of a different gender, they expose the arbitrary and what we call the "natural" way in which gender is learned.

What exactly we learn but what is never mentioned is poignantly revealed in the comments of a postoperative transsexual. Asked by a curious friend, "Did it hurt when they cut off your testicles?" "No," she replied, "not really." "Did it hurt when they split open your penis to fashion a vagina?" Again, she replied, "No." "What really hurt," she continued, "was when they cut my pay check in half." What she understands, as do the many other women worldwide who are paid one half of what a man earns for the same task, is that gender is a status and that "woman" signifies inferiority and subordination that has no biological or psychological basis. In our society we speak of gender differences, but there are many more similarities than differences between genders. Whose purposes does this stress on difference serve?[25] I hope you will answer that it serves patriarchy and the privileges of men.

Sandy Stone, in her recent posttranssexual manifesto, urges us to challenge our culture's binary gender system and to "generate a true, effective and representational counterdiscourse . . . to speak from outside the boundaries of gender, beyond the constructed oppositional nodes which have been predefined as the only positions from which discourse is possible."[26]

The desire to challenge and to destabilize the binary nature of gender identities on which patriarchy precariously teeters also has led some scholars and gender activists to study the North American Indian *berdache*. The *berdache* were individuals of one anatomical sex who took the dress and performed the activities of a different gender. Though there are a few reports of females who took the gender attributes of males, the overwhelming evidence, just like with the majority of male-to-female American transsexuals, is of men transvested as women, performing women's work and offering sexual service. The literature on the *berdache* lists various ways that crossing from one gender to another could occur: parental assignation of a child to one gender as a substitution for lack of a child of that gender, the choice of a gender better suited to personal inclinations, religious or ritual election, and the imposition of another gender as humiliation.[27]

The accumulating information on the *berdache* indicates that in the various societies in which the custom was observed, the gender system was much more fluid than our own. Gender was less tied to anatomical sex and allowed for intermediate and third genders. Important questions have been raised by this scholarship about how gender asymmetries in Native American cultures are ordered and reflect the division of labor and the unequal distribution of power, for it has prompted discussions about the asymmetries in our own gender order.[28]

[25] Henry Aaron, *The Comparable Worth Controversy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1986); Joan Acker, *Doing Comparable Worth: Gender, Class and Pay Equity* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1989).

[26] Sandy Stone, "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," unpublished paper, 1991, p. 22.

[27] Walter Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1986); Charles Callender and Lee Kochems, "The North American Berdache," *Current Anthropology* 24 (1973): 443–70; Harriet Whitehead, "The Bow and the Burden Strap: A New Look at Institutionalized Homosexuality in Native North America," in *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality,* edited by Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 80–115.

[28] See for example Will Roscoe, *The Zuni Man-Woman* (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), and my critique, "Must We

Seeking to understand how white Anglo-Saxon Protestants construct their notions of kinship and their most personal identities in the United States, cultural anthropologist David Schneider argued more than twenty years ago that the symbol of conjugal sexual intercourse was the master symbol around which kinship ideology was organized. Schneider wrote,

> Sexual intercourse as an act of procreation creates the blood relationship of parent and child and makes genitor and genetrix out of husband and wife. But it is an act which is exclusive to and distinctive of the husband-wife relationship: sexual intercourse is legitimate and proper only between husband and wife and each has the exclusive right to the sexual activity of the other. . . . Sexual intercourse between persons who are not married is fornication and improper; between persons who are married but not to each other is adultery and wrong; between blood relatives is incest and prohibited; between persons of the same sex is homosexuality and wrong; with animals is sodomy and prohibited; with one's self is masturbation and wrong; and with parts of the body other than the genitalia themselves is wrong. All of these are defined as "unnatural sex acts" and are morally, and in some cases, legally, wrong in American culture.[29]

The products of sexual intercourse, children born of shared substance, are related to their parents naturally, by blood or the natural order of things. Father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, grandfather, and grandmother are blood relatives. These relationships originate in conjugal intercourse, by a process that is deemed to be natural. People are also related through marriage, an institution rooted in law and custom. A husband and wife are related and duty-bound to each other through human laws. They are husband and wife, and their parents are in-laws (father-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, etc.).

White Americans organize their kin relationships around two orders: the order of nature, which is human and based on blood, and the order of law, which is based on the rule of reason. These two basic elements—nature and law—on which American notions of relatedness rest, are the basic oppositions through which spatial, political, philosophical, and zoological categories are often constructed and understood. One only has to study how the United States defines citizenship and nationality to see this point. Americans either are born into the nation or enter through a legal process we call *naturalization*. Three types of citizens are possible in the United States: (1) those who are born American but are naturalized citizens of another country, (2) those who are born elsewhere but are naturalized as Americans (quite frequently by marrying an American citizen), and (3) those who are American by birth and law.[30] Nature and law thus create citizens.

The nature/law code that derives from the domain of kinship creates other basic dichotomies, which constantly refer back to the symbol of conjugal sexual intercourse, to differentiate between us/them, insider/outsider, male/female, law-abider/

Deracinate Indians to Find Gay Roots?" *Out/Look* 1 (Winter 1989): 61–67.

[29] David Schneider, *American Kinship: A Cultural Account* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 38.

[30] David M. Schneider, "Kinship, Nationality, and Religion in American Culture: Toward a Definition of Kinship," in *Symbolic Anthropology: A Reader in the Study of Symbols and Meanings,* edited by Janet L. Dolgin, David S. Kemnitzer, and David Schneider (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 67–68.

criminal, human/animal, clean/dirty, and, until quite recently, capitalist/communist.

Let me use several examples from the recent past to elucidate how the basic categories of kinship order the larger social and cultural realms. Take the April 1980 arrival of 125,000 Cuban refugees in the United States, an event which became known as the Marielitos boatlift. In the first days of the exodus, when the movement was but a trickle, President Jimmy Carter welcomed the Cubans as refugees from Castro's totalitarian communism. As the numbers arriving in Florida mounted, the public rhetoric, particularly in conservative news magazines, shifted radically. Now Cuba was "unleashing a new human wave against this country." Jack Watson, an aide to President Carter stated that "Castro . . . is using people like bullets aimed at this country."[31]

In two months, the Marielitos went from being political refugees yearning for democracy to bullets—things to be feared. Initially, the press admitted that Castro had also freed several hundred criminals. That number was quickly imagined as gigantic, and the dominant media stereotype of the Marielitos became that of single males, petty thieves, antisocial criminals, and homosexuals. In the case of the Marielitos, the nation's borders and the borders of moral community regulated by law were under attack, and that attack was fundamentally imagined as sexual. Cuban men of modest means, dark- skinned single men who were not members of families, homosexual men—as one journalist put it, "Men counter to the spirit of machismo," who by their practices challenged compulsory heterosexuality—were lumped together as criminals and excluded from America. The United States is a moral community of law-abiding citizens. Families are its foundation. Only such a kinship logic helps us explain the resistance to the foreigner.

My next example comes from the state of California, where I live, and where the economic depression has provoked a middle-class hysteria that at the moment is focused on Mexican, Central American, and Asian immigrants. Treating immigrants like animals and creatures from another planet because they have violated the law (they are illegal aliens after all) is well known and routine. But in the last three years, and with absolutely no basis in fact, middle-class San Diegans have branded single male immigrants as rapists and thieves and the women as promiscuous welfare-dependent mothers. To stop the rapists and thieves, a movement called "Light up the Border" was started. Respectable middle-class white families drive to the hills overlooking the U.S./Mexico border and shine their car lights on the fence that separates the two countries. Citizen arrests of illegal aliens occur regularly and many of these arrests have been violent and have resulted in death for the immigrants.

Trying to allay middle-class fears over the state's fiscal crisis, Governor Pete Wilson has targeted welfare mothers in his most publicized economic reform measure. There will be no additional support payments for children born outside of wedlock. There will be no welfare benefits for anyone who has arrived in California during the last three years. Instead of rehabilitating the economy, Wilson has scapegoated the most vulnerable group—prolific, unmarried, immigrant women on welfare. Again, recall Schneider's point that heterosexual marital intercourse structures the way law and order are imagined, how families are formed, and what is proper civic behavior.

Think back too, for a moment, to the early reporting in 1984 and 1985, on AIDS, a virus transmitted through sex, by contact with infected semen and blood. One of the early hypotheses about the disease was that

[31] For this discussion, I have relied extensively on John Borneman's "Immigration as Penetration: The Marielitos Boat Lift," *Journal of Popular Culture* 20, no. 3 (1986): 73–92.

promiscuous white middle-class homosexuals in the United States had contracted the disease through anal intercourse with promiscuous black Haitians. Haitians, according to this view, had transported the virus from Africa where it was widespread in the heterosexual population. Africans, the hypothesis continued, had contracted the virus from close contact with monkeys, among whom the disease had long existed. AIDS was thus initially constructed as a disease embodied in unmarried, transgressive gay and black bodies who engaged in the sin against nature—sodomy.[32]

Given the centrality of blood and of blood relatives in Anglo-American kinship thought and practice, it is no coincidence that our symbols of ethnicity and race have been frightfully rooted in the deemed metaphysical quality of blood. Arguments made since the sixteenth century—that social privileges stemmed from a certain quality of blood, that blood mixture had to be avoided for fear of mongrelization, and that one's purity of blood gave one the right to rule and to dominate—are but some of the more virulent naturalizations of difference as distinctions of blood.

It is important to remember that the ways in which groups establish we/they distinctions, which arise from the unequal distribution of real and symbolic goods and which are so central to ethnic boundaries, is a dynamic, fluid, and ever-changing process. Nonetheless, the process is reified through reliance on body symbols that are deemed "authentic" and "unchanging." In the last thirty years, for example, individuals of African origin in the United States have called themselves (as opposed to what whites have called them) *Negroes, Blacks, Afro-Americans*, and *African Americans*. The meaning of each of these identities has been different, as have been the individuals who claim them.

If one goes farther back to the arrival of Christopher Columbus and his compatriots in 1492, they, too, invented "Indians" where none had existed previously. Erasing complex social and political distinctions in the organization of indigenous societies, the conquerors leveled the native hierarchies of their subjects by calling them all "Indians." It was only after Indians had been created that men from Castile, Valencia, Avila, and Estemadura, united in a new and alien territory, identified themselves as "Spaniards." They did so in opposition to "Indians." But that identity did not last long. As social and cultural mixture proceeded, an elaborate set of legal color categories was created—a *pigmentocracy*—to regulate the body politic. By the end of the eighteenth century, "Spaniards," "mestizos," and "mulattos" disappeared and regional, linguistic, and national identities took their place.

Closer to home and closer to the present are a host of political identities that have emerged over the last thirty years, but which are imagined to be as antique as Adam and Eve. Asians from various nations including Japan, Korea, China, and Vietnam have banded together in the United States as Asian Americans.[33] Women of African, Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican ancestry united as "women of color," inventing this new category to challenge the category of "woman," which they saw as meaning only white middle-class women. In the 1970s, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans banded together in Chicago to create themselves as "Latinos," an ethnic term that asserted their linguistic unity.[34] And as Stanley Liberson and Mary Waters have

[32] Paul Farmer, *AIDS and Accusation: Haiti and the Geography of Blame* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1992).

[33] Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1992).

[34] Felix Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978).

discovered, a small but increasing number of persons—12 percent in 1980—claim a new ethnicity as "Whites" and as "White Americans."[35]

What I have been trying to illustrate with these examples is that in the dominant Anglo-American culture of the United States, heterosexual marital intercourse creates blood relations, relationships that create family, and relationships that are believed to be the foundation of our nation as a moral community regulated by law. It is a moral community that grants citizenship principally to those that mirror its body order and that resists penetration by those who do not. I have tried to show, through examples of xenophobia, racism, sexism, and heterosexism, how these local hatreds were anchored to arbitrary categories of the body and, more specifically, to white Anglo-Saxon Protestant notions of kinship, blood, and family that when projected outward become the fate of the American nation and the destiny of a people. If space allowed, I could cite numerous other examples from the civil wars that have been raging in the American body politic over control of the human body for the last thirty years—the abortion and choice debates about control over women's bodies; the English-only campaign to force immigrants to learn English; the censorship fights over the artistic representation of the sexual, homosexual, black, and transgressive bodies; the argument over border and trade protectionism expressed as Japan bashing and fantasies of Mexican hordes invading the United States, and the debate over the definition of what constitutes the family.[36]

Let me conclude by returning to the major global processes with which I began and which are currently shaping our world—the redefinition of borders marked by the movement of people, money, and commodities across national borders, and the technological developments that are erasing the known boundaries of the body. The United States, Canada, and Mexico, in order to better compete with Japan and the European Community, recently concluded a free trade agreement that will allow labor, capital, and products to move in a larger and unfettered area. A graying Euro-American population that has not reproduced itself is forced to rely increasingly on immigrants for labor, transfer payments, and general prosperity, and as this continues, these movements of people, money, and commodities will, by necessity, intensify. The entry of large numbers of racially marked immigrants into American cities is already causing heightened levels of tension, as the recent Los Angeles riot, the most destructive of our century, demonstrates.

We live in an increasingly global community. As we adapt to the changes before us, we have two distinct options. The first, which I have described here in great detail, is to turn inwardly to local identities, imagining the body and its organization as the last real truth of our existence. The second option, to think globally about identities, has been around as long as nationalism has been a potent force on the world stage. In the nineteenth century, workers resisted nationalism by promoting the idea of proletarian internationalism, thinking of themselves as tied to a global community of class interest. Much the same could be said of Roman Catholics and Muslims who, in opposition to nations, think of their religions as creating a global communion of the faithful.

Benedict Anderson, in his book, *Imagined Communities*, has argued that the nineteenth-century technology that allowed the nation to become such a powerful im-

[35] Stanley Lieberson and Mary C. Waters, *From Many Strands: Ethnic and Racial Groups in Contemporary America* (New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 1988), 264.

[36] James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America; Making Sense of the Battles Over the Family, Art, Education, Law, and Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

aginary community was print journalism. Through dailies and weeklies, it created a readership simultaneously linked not only to events in the reader's own nation but also, through comparison, to other nations around the globe. In our own day, and in the century that is before us, print text is increasingly irrelevant, replaced by visual and electronically encoded symbols that are transmitted over fax lines, through local area networks, and through modems that are linked to satellites. Already the five existing supercomputers in the world can link the territories of our globe electronically in a simultaneous community that knows no identities based on sex, gender, race or ethnicity. Closer to home, computer networks in every major town allow people to meet and communicate as any human identity they care to be. Want to be a tall, dark, and handsome man, or a short, blond, and ugly woman? The person at the other computer terminal, lacking visual markers, imagines you as you want to be. We can do much the same thing any day for a nominal charge, by picking up the phone and dialing 1-900-DIAL-SEX. The person at the other end creates a fantasy with and for you that is quite disembodied and exists only in cyberspace and your monthly phone bill.[37]

We must realize that the local identities of race, ethnicity, gender, and sex, which we are currently invested in, are not immutable. Those identities have changed over time, despite a constant appeal to nature and to a natural, unchanging order. Indeed, beware whenever you hear nature and natural orders invoked by people who want to impose quite unnatural schemes. Be aware, too, that the local identities of race, sex, gender and ethnicity were products of the Enlightenment. At that revolutionary moment in the history of discursive practices, vision was elevated over the other senses as the privileged route to reason. We thus speak of "brilliant" persons, of "illuminating" ideas, of "insightful" perspectives, and the like. But "If all men are created equal," as the Enlightenment ideology of the United States proclaims, then a whole variety of visual distinctions were necessary to explain why women, Native Americans, and African slaves were not equal. They were not men—or not white men—and were not free property owners, and therefore they were not citizens. All of these personal assessments were readily apparent visually. Imagine what might have happened if taste, touch, smell or, hearing had become the sense that led us to the experience of liberty, equality, and fraternity?

Force yourselves, too, to imagine how technology will change how we think about the body over the next century. Already technology has penetrated our physical bodies. Pacemakers set heart rhythms; artificial limbs move people about; plastic knees, hips and shoulders support worn joints; and clinically engineered DNA runs through human bodies seeking and destroying disease. Computers can synthesize our voice and thought patterns. Perhaps in the not-too-distant future, neural computers will mimic human memory and learning.[38]

As we embark on our future, we should not think of it as an adverse relationship to technology and change.[39] Technology was what first brought us out of the cave. In the Western tradition, we have numerous instances where the past and the future were

[37] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991); Michael Hein, "The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace," and Allucquerre Rosanne Stone, "Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?: Boundary Stories About Virtual Culture," in *Cyberspace: First Steps,* edited by Michael Benedikt (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1991), 59–118.

[38] Maureen Caudill, *In Our Own Image: Building the Artificial Man* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[39] See Linda Jacobson, ed., *Cyberarts: Exploring Art and Technology* (San Francisco: Miller Freeman, 1992).

resolved amicably in symbolic form. The ancients imagined mermaids and centaurs—half human and half animal. In the nineteenth century, the railroad, the beast of the day, was naturalized in the symbolic form of the Native American. Trains were named "The Big Chief" and "El Capitan" and depicted as such on travel posters.[40]

[40] T. C. McLuhan, *Dream Tracks: The Railroad and the American Indian 1890–1930* (New York: Abrams, 1985).

Today we link ourselves to a rural agrarian past, relating intimately to our dog Fido, our cat Kitty, and our parrot Mimi.

For our future, let us imagine ourselves as cyborgs, half human and half machine, not as a frightening science fiction fantasy but as a splendid advance close at hand. If Christopher Columbus had believed that he would be destroyed by all the fantastical beings that decorated medieval maps—pygmies, giants, and headless creatures—we might not be here today gazing into a crystal ball at the year 2020.

Social and Cultural Trends

Commentary

NANCY SAHLI

About the author: Program director at the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) since 1991, Nancy Sahli holds degrees in American history from Vassar (A.B.) and the University of Pennsylvania (M.A. and Ph.D.). She was coordinator of the NHPRC's first Directory of Archives and Manuscript Repositories in the United States *(1978), and she has written many books and articles on archival administration, automation, and description, as well as women's history. Her* MARC for Archives and Manuscripts: The AMC Format *received the Society of American Archivists' C.F.W. Coker Prize. She is also an SAA Fellow.*

RAMÓN GUTIÉRREZ'S METAPHOR of the body as a mirror for a culture's self-definition is one that archivists would do well to consider. I would, however, like to recast the analogy by asking whether the same hierarchical, heterosexual, familial, patriarchal relationship patterns that he finds characterizing our "moral" culture also are the dominant themes in the history of our archival establishments. Are these the themes that influence the kinds of materials we select for acquisition, the ways in which we arrange and describe historical records, and even our decision making in such seemingly unrelated areas as preservation and electronic records?

Perhaps this is as it always has been, that the dominant culture has defined what will be preserved and transmitted to future generations. For dominant cultures have held the keys to power and to those institutions that both create and preserve the historical record. What we have been witnessing during the past thirty years, however, is the increasing diversification of that culture, accompanied by rising self-consciousness of particular groups in society, groups eager to document their own history and gain access to those bits and pieces of their history that have survived in traditional repositories.

A central theme of Gutiérrez's paper is that the planet is rapidly shrinking in terms of our ability to communicate with, do business with, and physically move to and among different locations and peoples. Old national lines blur in ways that would not have been possible without satellite communication, fiber optics, television, and myriad other technological tools. The physical migration of peoples is but one manifestation of this crossing back and forth. In addition, we are mistaken if we assume that the change is confined only to the United States or Canada. Rather, the entire world is in a climate of change, constant change that in many cases is difficult to anticipate, let alone control. The idea of trying to pre-

dict what the world will look like in 2020 is folly indeed.

I do not propose to tell the archival profession what it should document in this sea of change. For one thing, the information sources are too many and varied, and they range far beyond the purview of the archivist, with his or her concerns for "original" documents. But I do hope that archivists can begin to reflect on the ways that the historical records they do collect and make available will serve, like the body, as "a culturally constructed system of signs, symbols, and meanings." Choosing to retain documentation only of policy decisions rather than of implementation practices, when those policy decisions may be made by Euro-American males and the implementation practices may be carried out by African-American females, sends a definite message about what is worth remembering.

The increasing importance of global telecommunications, as well as what is to be hoped is the continued democratization of the world's political structures, can already be seen as some organizations serving the archival community move into an international environment. The Research Libraries Group, which operates the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN), comes immediately to mind in this regard as it encompasses an increasing array of international members. No longer is access to information about archival holdings necessarily restricted to the lucky few who have the time and money to travel to distant repositories. Yet, even though electronic document delivery is technologically possible, we must ensure that the means of access are available to all. The glory of previous generations of immigrants—the free public library—must be sustained, and user access to other information sources must be enhanced.

With this growth of telecommunications comes the increased need for standards to facilitate communication and for user education so that clients know what is available and how it may be accessed. These, to me, are the weak links in the chain at the present time. Although the archival profession internationally has made significant advances in standardization just in the past decade, the resources to continue to do so and to speed up developments to keep pace with the rapidity of technological change simply are not there. We can either focus on those things that we do well and that give us and our repositories a unique niche in the world, or we can spread ourselves so thin that we end up doing nothing well. Moreover, we need to continue to identify ourselves and our institutions clearly as "archivists" and "archives." Despite what some of my estimable colleagues say, I do not think that archivists can or should take on the task of moving beyond the defined missions of their repositories to try to document virtually all that is going on in the world now and in the future. Especially as we move into an increasingly global economic and social environment, the absurdity of American archivists attempting to do this on their own becomes apparent.

This raises the issue, of course, of who does document these multinational, multicultural undertakings, and why. One project that is trying to come up with some answers is being implemented by the Center for History of Physics of the American Institute of Physics (AIP). This project, which is directed by Joan Warnow-Blewett, has received funding from multiple sources, including the National Science Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and my own agency, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. AIP is examining how multi-institutional, multinational team research projects in physics are conducted and what kinds of documentation they create, with an overall objective of trying to determine who should be keeping the records of this work and how. But despite the fine work this project is doing, it is also clear that we cannot provide grant funding to deal with

similar documentation issues in virtually every field for which there are multinational or cross-cultural dimensions influencing how documentation of enduring value is created and maintained. Electronic communication only adds to the problem.

Many of our archival principles and theories are derived from political structures that were dominant in European and American culture during the early twentieth century. The concept of hierarchy is as much a reflection of patterns of dominance and authority prevalent in corporate and government systems in Western Europe at that time as it is a useful method for organizing historical records and information about them. The very assumption that researchers will be more interested in, or will give greater value to, knowing an organization's placement in a bureaucratic hierarchy than to knowing what that organization did or the topics with which it dealt demonstrates this kind of erroneous reasoning. The great weakness of many archival description practices at the present time is that they pay too little attention to the real needs of users for specific information. While we cannot possibly return to the days of indexing and calendaring, we must embrace approaches other than the tried and true agency history, accompanied by series descriptions focusing on the form of the documents instead of their content. Although it is true that certain forms of documentation, such as merchant's ledgers, time and attendance records, birth and marriage records, and the like are more or less self-descriptive, this is not the case with many of the series descriptions that have been created for large, contemporary records collections.

Standards used in description and in other areas are, of course, in a constant state of evolution. And although archivists may be limited in the roles they can play in establishing most electronic communication and documentation standards, archivists are not so limited in another key role that they play—that of educators of potential users of archives and archival holdings. I have already referred to the ability of RLIN to provide its users with access to information about a wide range of archival and library holdings worldwide. But this potential for access will not be realized if users do not know that RLIN exists or if they do not know how to use the system when they do learn that it exists. Unlike the card catalog or the open stacks in a public library, use of electronic networks requires the user not only to have access to a terminal but, in many cases, also to be able to pay for searches and, if the archivist or librarian does not serve as intermediary, to understand the search instructions.

This is a tall order for the casual user who may be more comfortable in Vietnamese than in English. Many people find even approaching a computer intimidating; we must take steps to address the growing problem of a stratified society in which information about archives and other resources is effectively denied to those who are culturally uncomfortable with or unable to use the dominant computer technology. Although we are seeing multilingual applications in some cases—the computer banking machine that I use, for example, gives me a choice of Spanish or English instructions—I do not see the dominance of English as the language of politics, the primary global culture, and technology diminishing very soon. There is a strong argument for bilingualism, such as we see here in Canada or in parts of the United States, especially as a means of preserving unique cultural identities and facilitating education, but desirable though it may be on those grounds, it is hard to imagine infinite multilingualism in the global economic and political arenas.

Another problem for archivists is that our lack of facility in the languages of many of the immigrant groups moving around the globe seriously inhibits our ability to include their documentation even selectively in our libraries and archives or to under-

stand what it says so that we might knowledgably seek to include it in our holdings. This lack of language competency, of course, is not unique to the late twentieth century. Lack of facility in seventeenth-century Dutch has prevented researchers from dealing adequately with early New York history, to the point that it was long believed that the sources did not exist. Contemporary scholars are finding that the sources do exist but have been bypassed because no one could read them. When I go to my favorite Thai and El Salvadoran restaurants there are placards, newpapers, and similar printed materials in Thai or Spanish. Although I can stumble through written Spanish, I cannot read Thai, which uses its own alphabet. Are archivists failing to collect even traditional forms of documentation of the latest wave of immigration simply because they do not know the languages involved? Or, since some immigrant groups—from former British colonies, including the Indian subcontinent—use English as their dominant language, is the failure to acquire these sources due to simple shortsightedness or even anti–Third World prejudice?

We must, however, resist the tendency to view all of this newest immigration and transglobal movement as involving only "them" and not "us." Indeed, as we see with the rise of the multinational corporation, the transferences are many and involve capital, management, and finished products. Only the workers themselves seem to stay put; the factory comes to them, to whichever location offers the most profitable conditions for the corporation. Documenting this sort of corporate culture in the present, let alone the future, becomes a very slippery task, as we have seen with the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) scandal. What we may hope for is that bits and pieces of the record will be preserved by archivists in the various countries in which these corporations and intergovernmental agencies do business. Yet without clear demarcations of jurisdiction in either the corporate or political sphere, whose responsibility should it be to preserve the records of enduring value created by these strange, octopus-armed creatures?

All of this concern with standards, with who acquires what, and with how archivists cope with challenges posed by multilingualism supposes that the year 2020 will see pretty much the same environmental conditions that exist today: archives still standing as institutions, underfunded perhaps, but with an active profession still able to provide essential services to users of many different types with many different needs. There are some concerns that I have, however, that Ramon Gutiérrez did not bring up in his paper but that I think we should consider in trying to anticipate what may happen during the next thirty years. In 1930, the population of the United States was about 100,000,000 people. The 1990 population was 250,000,000.

The situation, of course, is even more dramatic when world population is considered. Just as technology and the pace of change seem to be growing exponentially, so the strain on the planet's resources is already so heavy that it is hard to envision what lies thirty years ahead. The irony, of course, is that we have the technological capability to develop alternative, sustainable energy sources, to limit human reproduction to a level commensurate with the planet's carrying capacity, and to undertake other economization measures ranging from decreased meat consumption to an increased emphasis on preventive health care, but we seem to lack the common sense or will to do so. Even archivists are starting to realize that they have no business taking materials into their repositories when they lack the resources to manage them properly. Diseconomies of scale take over the bigger things get, whether it is the size of populations or the size of bureaucracies. Where this leads, I do not know, but it is up to each of us to follow the adage of

thinking globally and acting locally. Archivists, as much as anyone, need to be responsible for their own decisions and to refrain from blaming the system if the choices they make in the short term cause more long-term problems than they solve.

Changing demographics, however, may be made to work to our advantage. An aging, well-educated population in good health may enlarge the pool of willing volunteers on whom we may call for assistance. At the same time, this population should also increase the number of users, especially genealogical researchers, who flock to our repositories and seek access to our holdings. An overall increase in the motivation of employees, due in part to the sheer need to compete for those few jobs that are available, may lead to improved quality of work. Shrinking resource levels can have the same effect, as methods and procedures are streamlined and focused on essential needs in the face of revenue shortfalls.

Some of our archival colleagues argue that given the rapid rate of change our world is experiencing, especially technological change, we need to totally rethink the archival mission and our methods of doing business, even to the point of discarding all of our established theories and practices. Although these prophets are a bit fuzzy about how exactly this should be accomplished on a day-to-day basis, I would argue that any major changes we propose to undertake should be evaluated in an international context, rather than within the narrower, nation-based professional boundaries to which we are accustomed. And they should be evaluated with respect to the needs of our users, rather than in terms of some abstract theory that, although intellectually stimulating, is not grounded in the day-to-day work of running archival programs. Because of the sheer size and influence of the American archival community worldwide, developments in the North American hemisphere are likely to have an impact on the way archives in other parts of the world do business. This only increases the seriousness of our task and the care and caution we must take.

At the same time, we need to be aware that standards and standardization are tools, not ends in themselves. We may not be able to respond, nor should we expect to respond, to every external condition that this rapidly changing world may present to us. We need to remember that our principal function is to preserve records of enduring value and make them available for use. Admittedly, those records will take many forms, just as our users will change to keep pace with the demographics of our society. But adapting to change is not an end in itself. Archivists should not surrender all the values that have governed the evolution of our profession and its institutions over the years. The difficult task is to determine those we should retain and those we should discard or change. It is up to you to come up with the answers.

Social and Cultural Trends

Commentary

DEBRA NEWMAN HAM

About the author: Debra Newman Ham, the specialist in Afro-American History and Culture in the Manuscript Division at the Library of Congress, is the author of Black History: A Guide to Civilian Records in the National Archives *(1984) and is the editor of* African-American Mosaic: A Guide to Black History Resources in the Library of Congress *(1993). She has also written a number of articles about black women's history. Ham received her B.A. and Ph.D. from Howard and her Master's from Boston University. Before coming to the Library of Congress in 1986, she worked for sixteen years at the National Archives as Black History Specialist.*

AS RAMÓN GUTIÉRREZ HAS STATED, the diversity that already existed in the Americas in 1492 was only enhanced by the journey of Columbus. Europeans, Africans, and, eventually, Asians were added to the many Native American ethnic groups situated in the Western hemisphere when Columbus arrived. As these cultures intermingled over the last five hundred years, the Euro-Americans emerged as the socially, economically, and politically dominant group. Consequently, most of the American cultural institutions were shaped by them and focused on their contributions.

From the colonial period in what would become the United States, the personal papers that were preserved tended to focus on literate Euro-Americans, particularly the lives of great men, such as presidents, statesmen, and military leaders. Historical documents relating to women, African Americans, and Native Americans were retained primarily for statistical purposes or only as their lives intersected with those of the patriarchs. The political empowerment of minority groups in the latter half of the twentieth century, primarily because of a long and successful civil rights movement waged by blacks and whites alike, helped fuel the desire to learn more about the history of the culturally disenfranchised.

Both scholars and students began to descend on archives and research libraries to find out not only about George Washington but about his wife and his slaves, not only about Jefferson but about his relationship with Sally Hemings, his slave artisans, and the oft-pictured Isaac, "a Monticello slave." Personal papers that were carefully preserved because they chronicled the contributions of great men unintentionally yielded much about other groups of Americans. I am not arguing that African Americans and women in the lives of great men had been totally ignored by scholars, but I am stating that those who studied these matters were

not generally either women or African Americans who would be able to search the documents with a nontraditional perspective.

By the time of the cultural upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, many of the patriarchs' papers had been item-indexed, published, and microfilmed. Though film is nobody's favorite way of reading documents, the process did provide researchers with the ability to study primary sources at their local research libraries. To get at other materials with information about women and minorities, however, scholars began to descend on specialized libraries and research repositories to find sources. There was a rising demand that mainstream institutions expand their collections so that they would reflect the diversity of the American culture of which they were a part.

Books and articles on minorities and women began to proliferate, and reprints of old volumes and publication of new, specialized journals multiplied. The work of men such as Carter G. Woodson was dusted off and Negro History Week—alias Black History Month—became a regular February feature in schools, on television and radio, and even in government agencies. Some of these agencies now also celebrate special months to laud the contributions of women, Latinos, and Asian Americans, along with special awareness programs for people with disabilities.

For more than a dozen years, the records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) have been the most heavily used collection in the Library of Congress Manuscript Reading Room. Few scholars who use the collection are write histories of the association. Since the NAACP, established in 1909, was monitoring or involved in most of the social movements of the twentieth century with branches all over the country, its records document a herculean—and interracial—effort to eradicate social barriers. Scholars pursuing various aspects of social history use the collection to find sources for the movements in which they have an interest.

The old-timers tell me that the library's reading rooms used to be filled to capacity only during certain periods, such as the end of each semester as students prepared papers and during the summer when scholars were free to follow their intellectual pursuits. I recently heard from the Manuscript Division staff that lulls in usage are much shorter and that the daily number of researchers has increased. Mainstream historians sit beside braided-beaded scholars who insist that the mainstream cannot be properly assessed without an understanding of the inarticulate. Think about this: even while Patrick Henry was firing up the auditorium with the words "liberty or death," he held African Americans in bondage on his Virginia plantation. As Jefferson penned words about inalienable rights, he struggled with the question of slavery. George Washington followed Sir Guy Carleton and the evacuating British to Staten Island to try to reclaim his slaves who had sought liberty with the king's troops. And before one assesses Chief Justice Taney's views, expressed in the Dred Scott decision stating that a black person had no rights that a white person was bound to respect, is it not necessary to know that Taney himself was a slaveholder?

There is probably not a baby-boomer who did not cheer when movies featured the cavalry wiping out the "Indian savages" or did not fear when the wagon train was attacked with fiery arrows in the early morning light. Did we ever think much then about the treatment of the Native Americans? As Ramón Gutiérrez wrote about the illegal aliens from south of the border, I could not fail to reflect again that all that land had been wrested from them anyway and that it is probably poetic justice for them to return to reclaim it as their own. I

am not as interested in whether you agree with my historical interpretations as I am in emphasizing that times have changed. Today, should you argue that a master was benevolent toward his slaves, there is a distinct possibility that one of the slave's descendants may be there to quibble with you about it.

What does all this mean for the future? The first point that comes to mind is the necessity of accessibility. In our fast-paced era when minutes are at a premium, scholars want to be able to find collections and access them with a minimum amount of difficulty. They want user-friendly finding aids, quick service, long reading-room hours, and a comfortable work environment. They dream of microfilm readers that help and enhance, computerized registers and inventories that provide retrieval at the flick of the wrist, and guides that they can curl up with in California or Kalamazoo before they head to Washington, D.C.

Repositories, on the other hand, are strapped for money, space, and staff and are looking toward shorter hours, deaccessioned low-use collections, and tighter security. The Library of Congress Manuscript Division eliminated Saturday hours, installed security mirrors, detailed a roving guard to keep eager searchers from unintentionally mutilating—or deliberately stealing—documents. Observation cameras and monitors are on the way. Some Martin Luther King, Jr., letters have little rectangular holes where his signature used to be and the E185 Library of Congress book classification has been almost decimated by misguided black history enthusiasts.

Solomon said, "Of the making of many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness to the flesh." Yet the books and the document collections of the twenty-first century are far more likely to be read electronically while documents repose in a mountain in western Pennsylvania if they are retained at all. Repositories might be less likely to rival one another for collections if they knew that all would have electronic access to whatever was acquired. I retrieved Solomon's quote from my Franklin computerized King James Bible, which has an in-built concordance. Is it so far-fetched to think that I could put some type of disk into a handheld computer and be able to read through the Booker T. Washington collection or the Mary Church Terrell papers? Most bookstores now sell audiotapes of bestsellers and classics so that we can listen as we go. Some computers will even now write down our words as we talk. All of our registers at the Library of Congress are now on disk, but we use the technology only to make paper copies. However, we are beginning to experiment with electronic retrieval of the NAACP register for staff and searcher use. I believe that electronic retrieval is a real need for a future that will become even more socially and culturally diverse.

Not only has the electronic age affected the documents in our holdings, but it can also shape the collections we acquire in the future. Every donor now asks if we are interested in audiotapes and videotapes as well as papers and photographs. Although few historical actors now would allow it, videotapes and audiotapes could provide access to every moment of their day. Think of what President Richard Nixon's telephone tapes mean to him or how wiretapping has transformed criminology. Big Brother is living if not happily then at least peacefully with us, though we dreaded his coming. Repositories will have to make provisions for using a variety of methods for information retrieval, with subject categories to facilitate use by an increasingly diversified public. Today, as computerized banking moves us away from check cashing on payday, and as supermarkets and gas stations relish your money card more than your check, are computerized archives such a far-off dream? Accurate computerized subject indexing and quick retrieval no longer seem far away, especially to those

of us who have been introduced to the newest technology.

I am now working with a group compiling the *Harvard Guide to African-American History.* Harvard University Press has already discussed putting the material on CD ROM so that periodic updates could keep the guide current and provide for electronic retrieval. In a world filled with social and cultural diversity, when all groups are demanding equal time, what is a poor archivist to do? I suggest that we concentrate on user-friendly finding aids so that no matter how diversified our public might be, we will not be caught unaware. I may not know much about Native Americans, but I should be able to provide the researcher with a guide or a group of finding aids prepared by knowledgeable archivists to ease the way. We cannot know it all, but we must provide access to that with which we have been entrusted. Whether we are Afrocentric or Eurocentric, we still have the responsibility for allowing researchers the right to know.

I did research at the Liberian archives in Monrovia in 1981. In the politically sensitive post-coup situation, I feared that I might not have access to the records. Augustine Jallah, the archivist, asked what I was looking for. I replied that I was researching Liberian women in the nineteenth century. He happily invited me in, saying that there was nothing there. After I had spent about three full days in that musty, spidery repository, Jallah was mystified that I seemed to be finding things. There were wills, deeds, court records, and legislative proceedings, all of which concerned women. I do not know whether Jallah failed to see the women or was unable to see the history, but I believe it was the former. Let us not be, like him, so steeped in the mainstream that we fail to see the soil-enriching rivulets around us.